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EUROPEAN GENERATION LINK: PROMOTING EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP THROUGH INTERGENERATIONAL AND INTERCULTURAL LEARNING

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INTRODUCTION

In the context of current debates, it is sometimes conveniently forgotten that in the past decades, Europe has experienced several waves of internal migration and exile, including displaced persons before, during and after World War II, in the 1960s when “guest workers” were invited from South Europe to the richer states, after the fall of the Iron Curtain and through conflict in the former Yugoslavia. Despite the demonstrable fact that Europe is a continent of migration (both inwards and outwards), prejudices against migrants – almost invariably referred to as “immigrants” – linger on, especially among those who have little or no knowledge of European migration or migrants.

There are, furthermore, millions of older people who have not only experienced migration but who are “European citizens” in the sense that they have lived in several European countries, cultures and societies and who have thus collected considerable experience of “a wider Europe”. Promoting European citizens’ awareness of Europe has been one of the main objectives of European policy for many years but the treasure of those older people who have experienced a multilingual and multicultural life in Europe has hitherto been under-researched. A project called “European Generation Link” has, therefore, developed a web-based platform that contains stories of people who were born in Europe and have, during their lifetime, lived in more than one European country. Because of the multinational nature of the United Kingdom, migration between its constituent parts is included.

METHODOLOGY AND SUMMARY OF RESULTS

The stories are based on structured interviews, mainly carried out by young people. The purpose of using young people as interviewers was to transfer knowledge between generations and help to reduce prejudice and xenophobia among young people through greater understanding of European migrants. At the same time, the methodology included a mutual exchange of knowledge, in that the young interviewers taught computer skills to the older interviewees. The objective was to bring greater intergenerational respect.

The site is arranged like a real library, with individual volumes containing the stories, complemented by photographs and, in a few cases, audio files and video clips. Visitors may search the library using a variety of search parameters, including countries, periods, cultures and languages. Each story consists of a short biography, and at least three sections giving more details, and some include an account of the interview showing how the interview was conducted, what the tandem teams of young and old people learned from each other, which aspects they reflected on, what benefits they obtained etc. In some cases there is background information, for example, geographical and/or historical information, definitions of terms, an explanation of the education system, Christmas recipes etc. The detailed chapters fall into seven categories: family (including religious/family feasts like Christmas etc.); politics (World War II, Franco regime, flight ...); economic (“guest workers”, professions, career opportunities ...); environmental (fire / earthquake ...); love stories; education (school, vocational training, language skills, discovering ...); and social life (society in general,

friends ...). This collection of materials can be used for a wide variety of measures and interactions aimed at the promotion of European citizenship.

All contributors had to ensure that the legal regulations and individual concerns on copyrights and privacy are met. Therefore the partnership agreed to change the names of persons involved, make use of aliases or initials and also modify the names of places in certain cases (e.g. small villages). The interviewees signed an agreement concerning the publication of their stories, pictures, audio and video files, from which they could withdraw at any time. The provision of background information had to be in accordance with copyright law.

The interviews covered the whole life of the migrant. The questions suggested were only starters and interviewees were encouraged to elaborate on any topic as much as they wished. Interviewers were instructed to draw out details from stories for further information. They were told to ask only open questions (When? Why? How? Who?) instead of closed ones (yes-or-no questions).

The question areas for the interviews were:

1) Background

Where did you come from? Where did you grow up? Could you tell me about your childhood? What kind of memories do you have? What is your favourite childhood memory? Alternatively more concrete questions could be asked: What kind of people were your mother and father? How would you characterize your relationship with your siblings? What was the profession of your parents? What kind of life did your family have? What was your hobby? How would you describe the village/city/region where you grew up? Can you recall a political event that happened during your childhood? What was it?

2) Migration

Why did you leave your country? How did you travel? Why did you come to Hungary? Did you know someone here before? What happened to you/your family after arrival? What happened to your acquaintances, relatives? What kind of memories do you have as to the arrival and the first times? How did this change later on?

3) School, work

Where did you go to school? Did you like going to school? If the person attended school in Hungary: how difficult was it to integrate into a Hungarian school? How did other students, teachers react? Where did you work? How difficult was it to find a job as a foreigner? How did your co-workers react?

4) Being a migrant – everyday life

How is to live as a migrant in...? Is it an advantage/disadvantage? Why? Could you give me concrete examples? Do you think that people are open to foreigners?

5) How important is it for you...

to keep your traditions; use your mother tongue; keep in touch with other migrants; keep in touch with relatives, friends living in your home country; watch TV, read newspapers from your home country? Have you ever revisited your home country?

6) Final words

How does it feel to talk about your life? Do you often recall the past? Have you ever told these stories to others? If so, when and in what conditions? If not, why

not?

The stories in the library originate from Austria, the Czech Republic, France, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom. Stories were also collected in Turkey. In some cases, the interviews were with migrants who had returned to their country of origin.

Of the subjects of the stories analysed for this paper, 1 each originated from Greece, Northern Ireland, Montenegro, Slovakia, Bosnia and Morocco (the latter were ethnic French); 2 each from Latvia, Slovenia, Croatia and the Soviet Union; 3 each from Scotland and Austria; 4 each from England and Serbia; 5 from Poland; and 7 each from Romania and Spain.

The corresponding interviews took place in their current – mainly final – countries of residence, namely Slovenia (9); Scotland (7); Spain and Italy, 6 each; France and Romania, 5 each; Austria, the Czech Republic and England, 3 each; Latvia and Poland, 2 each; Sweden and Hungary, 1 each. They comprise 15 men and 32 women. The overall distribution reflects the number of stories written in or translated into English, French, Italian and Spanish, not the total number of stories collected.

Migrants generally have mixed fates on entering European countries. In the United Kingdom, for examples, refugees have a high rate of unemployment, irrespective of their education and skills; women migrants are likely to suffer a decline in social and economic status that may take years to recover, if it ever does, although their safety and the life chances of their children dramatically improved, especially in the case of refugees (Clayton 2005). One important question to which a tentative answer is sought is this: did the European migrants interviewed also suffer more than they benefited from migration?

Although the method used is innovative, especially in the range of countries that participated in the partnership and the partnership between younger and older, and potentially useful for international comparisons, the answer can only be tentative, because the interviewees were not randomly selected, but the extracts presented here – which include only those in a language understood by the author (English, French, Italian, Spanish, totalling 47 stories out of the 100 odd in the library) – may provoke further research questions leading to more systematic enquiry. Above all, the interviews allowed people, who had never been asked before, to tell their own stories.

REASONS FOR MIGRATION

Reasons for migration expressed in this study fall into the categories of love, economics and work, politics, war, adventure and family reunion or moving to a spouse's home country. Classification of qualitative data, however, is always a thought-provoking experience, especially when using other people's materials. In some cases, especially where several migrations had taken place, there was more than one reason, and one reason, such as moving with spouse or family, may or may not also come into the category of love. What is called love may also or instead be economics (I have excluded the latter possibility from the data, although I am sure it was sometimes the case, especially where marriages were arranged), and when one accompanies a loved one who is moving for work that is also economics. Politics and war also overlap but where the cause was unambiguously war, with risk of physical danger or death or actual displacement directly because of war, the migrants have been assigned to this category. Of course, most were very young and moved with their families, which adds another dimension.

Thus, my categorisation ended up like this:

Table 1 Reasons for migration, from 47 case studies

| Reason | Love | Economic | Politics | War | Adventure | Family |
|--------------|------|----------|----------|-------|-----------|--------|
| Love | 14 | 3 | - | - | 1 | 4 |
| Economic | 3 | 19 | 3 | - | 1 | 11 |
| Politics | - | 1 | 9 | 1 | - | 2 |
| War | - | - | 1 | 8 | - | 6 |
| Adventure | 1 | 1 | - | - | 4 | 0 |
| Family | 4 | 11 | 2 | 7 | - | 19 |
| Only reason: | 9 | 2 | 3 | 1 (7) | 3 | 2 |

The numbers in the red boxes refer to the total number of people whose reason included the one labelled. Lines and columns do not add up to the numbers interviewed, as between 1 and 3 reasons were recorded.

The bottom line counts instances where there was only one motive. Thus, nine people moved purely for love; three only for political reasons (all refugees); one was taken from her country in time of war to do forced labour; and two moved for reasons of family reunification.

Economic reasons were always connected with other factors (mainly family). The reason that war was the only reason for one person reflects the fact that the war migrants were mainly children who moved with their families – but the only reason the families moved was because of war and this is shown in brackets.

Thus:

- Love included family, adventure and economic motives – but not politics, war or adventure – and was the factor least combined with others;
- Economic motives included love, politics, adventure and family – but not war;
- Political motives included economics, war and family – but not love or adventure;
- War included politics and family – but not love, economics or adventure;
- Adventure included economics – but not politics, war or family;
- Family was included in every category except adventure – adventurers travelled alone.

In some cases, the interviewees had moved back to their countries of origin. This final migration is not recorded in the table. Again, by one or more of their reasons for migration and by ascending proportion of returners:

- Only 3 out of the 14 who moved for love returned home to their original countries;
- Only 2 of the 9 who moved for political reasons returned;
- Of the 19 who migrated with their families, 8 have returned;
- Of the 8 who were forced to move because of war, 4 have returned;
- Two of the 4 adventurers returned; the other returned for a long period but then went to her husband's country on retirement;
- Of the 19 who left for economic reasons, 11 have returned.

Table 2 Age at first migration, from 47 case studies, by reasons of migration

| Age | 1-15 | 16-30 | 31-45 | 46-60 | 61-65 | Total |
|---------------------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Love | - | 11 | 1 | 1 | 1 | |
| Economic | 1 | 11 | 3 | 1 | - | |
| Politics | 3 | 3 | 3 | - | - | |
| War | 5 | 2 | 1 | - | - | |
| Adventure | - | 4 | - | - | - | |
| Family | 12 | 6 | 1 | - | - | |
| No. of individuals | 12 | 24 | 9 | 1 | 1 | 47 |

As implied earlier, several of the interviewees had migrated more than once. In the table below, the number of countries listed includes the country of origin. Each country lived in is counted only once, even where there was more than one period of residence in a particular country.

As table 3 shows, the great majority of the interviewees had lived in only two countries, and the next highest category had lived in three. Furthermore, 20 had returned to their countries of origin, probably for good.

Table 3 Total number of countries lived in, from 47 case studies, by reasons of migration

| Number of countries | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Total |
|-----------------------|----|----|---|---|---|-------|
| Love | 9 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | |
| Economic | 9 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 1 | |
| Politics | 4 | 5 | - | - | - | |
| War | 1 | 3 | 3 | 1 | | |
| Adventure | 2 | 1 | 1 | - | - | |
| Family | 8 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 1 | |
| Number of individuals | 25 | 13 | 6 | 2 | 1 | 47 |

In many cases the country they returned to had changed for the better. All the Spanish interviewees had left during the Franco regime, two of these only for political reasons, and returned after it. The two Latvians had been displaced after the Second World War when the Baltic States were occupied by the Soviet Union and returned after their independence.

Table 4 Number of foreign languages known, from 47 case studies, by reasons of migration

| Number of foreign languages | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6+ | Total |
|-----------------------------|---|----|----|---|---|---|----|-------|
| Love | 3 | 4 | 4 | 2 | - | - | - | |
| Economic | 3 | 7 | 7 | 1 | - | - | 1 | |
| Politics | - | 3 | 5 | 1 | - | - | - | |
| War | - | 3 | 2 | 2 | - | 1 | - | |
| Adventure | 1 | 1 | 2 | - | - | - | - | |
| Family | 3 | 6 | 6 | 2 | - | 5 | 1 | |
| No. of individuals | 6 | 22 | 13 | 4 | | 1 | 1 | 47 |

Only 6 people spoke no other language than their mother tongue, one Austrian who migrated to Germany and the rest British people migrating to Anglophone countries or within the United Kingdom. One person spoke over 6 languages although she had migrated only once. The foreign languages spoken were, by number of people reporting: French 16; English, 11 each; German 10; Slovenian 7; Russian 5; Swedish 4; Italian and Hungarian, 3 each; Czech 3; Croatian 2; and 1 each of Spanish, Belarusian, Slovak, Finnish, Bosnian, Montenegrin and Macedonian. In most cases, people had learnt other languages as a result of their migration but a few had learnt languages because of their work or for interest.

EXTRACTS FROM STORIES

These three extracts from the stories analysed were chosen because they appealed to me in different ways. One of the stories, Ludmila, is a terrible reminder of the European past. The next story shows the other side of the coin, how the “victors” became part of the mass movement of displaced persons after the Second World War. The third, the only one chosen for economic migration, shows how this can be a complex issue.

Forced migration – war and politics

Of the 16 people in these categories, 12 were forced to leave their countries and 4 chose to. One had fled the Greek civil war with her family, who were poor peasants, when their village was evacuated. The most striking and detailed stories, however, come from survivors of the Second World War. I have chosen two, both of women from prosperous families.

Ludmila – sent to forced labour

Ludmila was 16, the daughter of a doctor and living in Russian-occupied Poland at the time of the Hitler-Stalin pact of 1942. She was transported to German-occupied Poland, given a number, 219, and set to work in a factory making plane parts. One day a German told her how to commit sabotage and she had great fun doing this. Then she was sent in a cattle wagon to a penal camp in Hamburg and set to dig trenches. A transport of 250-300 women of different nationalities was formed. They were all sent to dig trenches in inhuman conditions [...] They were constantly chilled to the marrow, hungry and exhausted. [...] Every day they had to dig a hole to a depth of 150 cm. It had to be 2 metres long and 80 cm. wide. Girls worked all day long while at night they were supposed to move along the trench line. [...] Ludmila managed to find a way to recuperate. The girls linked their arms so that the one in the middle had a chance to rest or sleep as she was dragged by her companions. They changed after some time to provide another one with some rest [...] Unfortunately, when someone was not strong enough to do her workload she was killed with a rifle or shot by guards. Ludmila witnessed five girls being killed in cold blood.

“One day in May 1945, squeezing through a gap between barn planks, we saw, although it was a dark and gloomy day, Germans fleeing in panic. We heard whirring of tanks and some soldiers wearing different uniforms appeared on the horizon. They were British soldiers who brought us freedom,” said Ludmila.

The young women were physically exhausted, wrapped in dirty blankets. At first the British thought they were elderly women... However, when she had already experienced all the atrocities of war, the time of stability brought her a serious lung disease. She had the first symptoms of the disease at the turn of 1946-1947. Ludmila was astonished that the whole war period did not have any harmful influence on her health. Her stay in a health resort brought a lot of new things into her life. She started recovering and she met the love of her life, a Polish officer who became her husband.

Beatrix – from darling of a Nazi family to Displaced Person

Beatrix belonged to an upper-class Austro-German family settled in Romania. Her grandfather had been a Supreme Court judge working for the Austrian emperor Franz Joseph and her grandmother still kept her “salon” where once a month, between four and six old ladies came for tea and the big salon on the ground floor, or in summers the veranda, was filled with fragile voices exchanging the latest gossip.

Her father was also a judge but unlike his father-in-law favoured Germany rather than Austria. Beatrix recalls vividly the many garden parties where hoards of academics and students, with their colourful caps and sabres, patrolled the house and the garden, but she was also a little bit repelled by the violent singing and the arrogance of many of those visitors against Anna, the cook, an old Ruthenian woman who had lived and worked in the house for almost her whole life.

The prosperity of the household and the social status of her family did not automatically mean that Beatrix was a happy child. Despite the large number of persons who were around her, she often felt lonely [...] there was the elegant art nouveau residence of Simon Stein, where twins in Beatrix's age lived. "But I was never allowed to go there and to play with them and they never came to visit me", she recalls, "and it was only when I was six years old and sort of insisted on seeing them that father explained to me: 'German girls never play with Jewish brats'."

In 1940, the well-protected world of Beatrix and her family came to an abrupt end. As a consequence of the Hitler-Stalin pact, "territorial and political rearrangements" forced German citizens in Romania to leave the country at short notice, or to stay in detention camps. The family opted for the first alternative and moved "home into the Reich", into Silesia [now in Poland] that was at that time considered to be in the heart of Germany. Her father got a job very quickly at the "Wirtschaftspolizei" (economic police) and Beatrix joined the "Bund deutscher Mädel" (BDM, the Nazi Germany girls' organisation) and later the "Reichsarbeitsdienst" (Reich labour service) where she worked as a nanny in various households.

In 1944, the war approached Silesia and the family moved to Sudetenland [...]; but then the Russian troops came closer again. Finally, in spring 1945, the family reached the bombed city of Linz in Upper Austria, where the Danube would become the border between the Russian and the American zones. They had lost their grandparents and three suitcases with the minimum for survival were the only possessions remaining from the Villa in Czernowitz...

Asked how she felt as a migrant, she replied that at the end of the war, almost everybody was a migrant. She felt some resistance from her husband's family first, that he had married a "Reichsdeutsche" (a German woman from the Reich), but that episode is long forgotten. Also forgotten are her dreams of becoming a surgeon, but ironically, with her declining health, she is "quite often in company with surgeons, but on the other side on the operation table", she jokes. Would she ever go back to visit Czernowitz? We know that the house still exists. Her answer is no. "I want to keep my memories intact and not open this chapter of my life again."

Ludmila finally returned to her home country and a happy middle-class life again. Beatrix married an Austrian mechanic and never returned to Romania or became a surgeon, as she had dreamt of doing.

"Unforced" migration - economics

It is too easy to assume that economic migrants always act through choice. Some do but others are forced by extreme poverty to look for a more tolerable life. The extract here gives yet another angle.

Florent – stranded in France

Florent was born in 1945 in Murcia, one of three children of an agricultural labourer. At the age of 9 he left school to work in a sandal factory for 3 pesetas a day [...] Conditions were hard and the foreman had no hesitation in hitting him when he worked too slowly. Soon he and his brother moved to their uncle's farm where they worked for board and lodging [...]

Every year his parents went to South-West France for the grape harvest. In 1957 all the children were old enough to accompany them [...] But that year the family could not earn enough to make the expensive return journey to

Spain along with sufficient savings. Thanks to the city mayor, the father and the elder son got jobs in a marble quarry [...]. Florent, however, was now able to return to school for a few years. He always regretted that the school leaving age was 14 instead of 16 as today.

He was then apprenticed to a wine grower but [...] he did not take to the work. At best, he would be an agricultural labourer. So he entered a factory – but after three months lost an arm in an industrial accident. Since he could no longer do manual work he needed to gain professional qualifications and after a long struggle, taking any job that came along in order to survive while he studied by correspondence course, he obtained a professional qualification in industrial design. He has done well financially and is thoroughly integrated.

For many years his parents thought that their stay in France was temporary, but Florent's accident changed their destiny. In France he received treatment covered by social security and had the chance to learn a trade, which would not have been the case in Spain.

OUTCOMES OF MIGRATION

There are many ways to analyse this data but the research question posed was, was life after migration better or worse, economically, socially or personally? Where the migration was voluntary, was it worth it, in economic, political or personal terms? Where the migration was involuntary, was there a happy outcome or not?

In order to simplify this analysis, the stories have been divided only by the primary cause of migration. The evaluation of the socio-economic outcomes is based on final levels of education and economic position, compared with pre-migration data; the personal outcomes are based on the subjective assessment of the interviewees or my interpretation of their feelings where these were not clearly expressed. The category “neutral” means that their socio-economic or personal situation did not change through migration.

As table 5 shows, most of the men but just over half of the women benefited positively from migration in socio-economic terms, and the proportion of men whose final personal outcomes are positive is also higher than that of women. The only negative socio-economic effects were experienced by women.

Table 5 Final outcomes for migrants from 47 case studies, by sex and primary reason only for migration (M=male, F=female)

| Outcomes | Socio-economic | | | Personal | | | Total persons |
|------------------|----------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|---------|---------------|
| | Positive | Negative | Neutral | Positive | Negative | Neutral | |
| Love | M2 F2 | - - | M1 F4 | M3 F3 | - F2 | - F1 | 9 |
| Economic | M5 F2 | - F1 | M1 F1 | M6 F3 | - - | - F1 | 10 |
| Politics | M1 F1 | - F4 | - F1 | M1 F3 | - - | - F3 | 7 |
| War | - F4 | - F2 | - F1 | - F7 | - - | - - | 7 |
| Adventure | M1 - | - F1 | M1 F1 | M1 F2 | M1 - | - - | 4 |
| Family | M2 F5 | - F1 | M1 F1 | M3 F3 | - F2 | - F2 | 10 |
| Men | 11 | - | 4 | 14 | 1 | - | 15 |
| Women | 14 | 9 | 9 | 21 | 4 | 7 | 32 |
| Total | 25 | 9 | 13 | 28 | 4 | 6 | 47 |

- Love had mixed socio-economic effects but mainly positive personal ones.
- The majority of economic migrants either did well or remained at a similar level and were happy.
- Political migrants, who were mainly refugees, suffered socio-economically but not, finally, personally.
- Victims of war had mixed fortunes economically but all ended up happy.
- The adventurers are too few and too diverse for generalisation.
- Those who moved with or to join their families did well socio-economically and most had happy outcomes.

In all, socio-economic outcomes were poor for only 9 people, all women, and personal outcomes for only 5, 1 man and 4 women.

CONCLUSION

As stated above, the data cannot be generalised since the sample is non-random, but it may act as a useful starting point for further research into the outcomes of migration. Above all, the stories of the interviewees are immensely valuable as first-hand accounts of a period that is rapidly becoming lost to collective memory. What I have not been able to show in this paper are photographs from private albums that illuminate these stories and bring them to life. I suggest that anyone who is interested in looking further into these lives go to the library and explore them:

www.european-generation-link.org

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